

# **UNAPPROVED**

## **CUMBERLAND SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES**

**There was a special meeting of the Cumberland School Committee on Monday, March 14, 2011 at the Cumberland High School Transitional Building Cafetorium, 2602 Mendon Road, Cumberland, Rhode Island.**

**Members Present: Jeff Mutter, Erika Sanzi, John Gibbons, Lisa Beaulieu, Dan Pedro, Mrs. Teel and Mr. Wood were absent.**

**Staff Present: Joseph A. Rotella, Esq., Director of Administration, Lisa Colwell, Director of Special Services**

### **Agenda Item #1: Call to Order**

**Chairman Mutter called the meeting to order at 6:21 p.m.**

**Agenda Item #2: Review and Presentations of RFP #SS-001 – Executive Search/Recruitment Services – Mr. Mutter noted that there were three responses; one company that responded (Coia) cancelled prior to this meeting, so there will only be two presentations. Dr. Bettencourt, Executive Director from NESDEC, gave the first presentation. He stated that his company does professional development, research and development, they help School Committee's and Superintendents work together, and since 1982 they have done more than 450 executive searches. The proposal is**

designed as a basic recruiting search, he noted that we could pick and choose options – he did design this proposal based on what he thought were our needs. Dr. Bettencourt added that he would be available to help train the screening committee. At this point he asked the SC what questions they had for him. Mr. Mutter asked him what the generic or standard search is that they do. Dr. Bettencourt said that it varies from district to district, it is based on what their needs are and what is required – normally they provide advertising, media, recruiting with SC to organize the interviews, speak with each candidate, involved in all the details of the search, all the aspects of the candidates and check with the client to see what else they would like more information on. Candidates will be invited to NESDEC for a workshop, if a candidate is chosen and on board in July – he or she will work with Mr. Kennedy (from NESDEC) and the Superintendent to work on goals that will be expected the first year. Mr. Mutter asked if they would conduct a community wide need assessment and Dr. Bettencourt said they do a survey, gain input that way, find focus groups and interview with groups that the SC identifies for us. He feels the groups will give them what they are expecting as far as skills, experience, etc. Dr. Bettencourt does not feel that you get interaction in a survey like you do in a focus group. At that point NESDEC would make a report for the SC and sift thru all the responses and make a candidate profile that the SC may be looking for based on focus groups input etc. In addition they will sit with the SC and then sift thru the information from the groups to come up with the actual profile. Mr. Mutter asked if that was a necessity and Dr.

Bettencourt said yes because he felt that the information gathered involves the community and focus groups and that is important. Dr. Bettencourt went on to say that typically a district our size might do six or seven focus groups. The groups could consist of parents, constituents, senior citizens, etc. Mr. Mutter then asked if there were any other options that he would recommend. Dr. Bettencourt said that if we were looking to come up with a screening committee and NESDEC was going to assist, then he thought it would be very helpful – it varies from district to district. Dr. Bettencourt also noted that we should consider additional advertising – which is not included in the proposal - \$350 for internet exposure for 30 days. Education Weekly would also be recommended, but their ads run about \$1,500 - \$1,800 – but they do offer a web base service for \$600 for 30 days – this is only on the web, not in their publication. Most candidates interact with emails, the web, hard copy mailings, etc. Dr. Bettencourt went on to say that they are a member of the National Study Councils and that they do a lot of networking. Mr. Mutter asked if every applicant will go through SC screening. Dr. Bettencourt said that it varies, he would suggest having a screening committee in place and let them review all applicants, then have initial interviews with which they think would be beneficial. Then the screening committee could reduce the number again and then SC would interview the top three or four, it is the SC that will have the final say as to who gets hired. Mr. Mutter asked about confidentiality regarding the applicants. Dr. Bettencourt suggested that they all be kept confidential, finalists can be publicized. Mrs. Beaulieu asked what works well and what does

not with the screening committee. Dr. Bettencourt said that it all can work well, it depends on how well you work with the community, if you add steps and extra pieces it will affect the timeline – but an accelerated timeline comes with risks. Mr. Gibbons noted that this SC wants to reach out nationally for the search, where do your candidates typically come from? Dr. Bettencourt said that lots come from the New England area, there have been exceptions, sometimes people have roots here and want to come back, but the majority is from New England. Mr. Gibbons asked if NESDEC had a pool of candidates or is each search unique. Dr. Bettencourt said they do have a base, but candidate profiles are important because then we can contact candidates when we know what you are looking for, particular skills, career paths, etc. Mr. Gibbons then asked if they were compensated – like typical headhunters. Dr. Bettencourt said absolutely not. Mr. Gibbons asked if Dr. Bettencourt could tell us about an unsuccessful search. Dr. Bettencourt said they had done a search for a regional middle school in Massachusetts, worked on the search for over a year. Finally, they brought in a candidate, but the candidate removed himself because he was hired in his own town to be the superintendent because the current one had taken ill. They did the process again and then hired a great candidate and actually he is still in the position. Sometimes you go through a search and the district likes a superintendent and then two years down the road finds it is not working out, if that happens NESDEC would conduct another search at no additional charge. Mrs. Sanzi asked why NESDEC thinks the talent is so to find. Dr. Bettencourt replied that the pipeline is

weak, the superintendent seat is challenging, resources are limited, some districts pay well but most districts struggle, so you really have to work to attract the applicants. Usually the candidates are concerned about three things, the quality of life for themselves and their family, will they have to relocate, can they work with the SC and what the compensation package is going to be. Mrs. Sanzi then asked if any district was really turned around after one of NESDEC hires. Dr. Bettencourt answered, Pawtucket. Their superintendent is working very hard, setting goals for the district and turning the district around in the long term. Mrs. Sanzi asked if NESDEC was in touch with any candidates that are familiar with non traditional schools, like charter schools. Dr. Bettencourt said yes, but it requires specific insights for that person to move into the public arena and they will need resources to do this, takes time for these people to understand how the district is run. Mrs. Beaulieu said that the tenure of the superintendent is important, what does NESDEC find to be the normal stay of a superintendent. Dr. Bettencourt said it was five years on the average. Mrs. Beaulieu asked what the resources would be for the non traditional candidates. Dr. Bettencourt said that mentoring or coaching is good, it serves as a reference for the first year. He finds a lot of principals become superintendents and because they come up through the ranks, mentoring and coaching is a great idea. Mrs. Beaulieu asked what the national compensation would be for a district our size and Dr. Bettencourt didn't think he could give a number, he just suggested to look at comparable communities – he said once you figure out the salary you should

probably put it in the ad's, it is usually helpful. Mrs. Beaulieu also asked if Dr. Bettencourt would help with the goal setting for the screening committee and he said he would be doing a four hour workshop. Mrs. Beaulieu wanted to know what the common qualification was that always came up and Dr. Bettencourt said it is usually communicator, someone visible in the community, someone the community will feel comfortable with, someone that you can talk to. Mr. Mutter asked if NESDEC would be ranking the applicants as they came in. Dr. Bettencourt said they would use the candidate profile and put it in each of the screening committee member's hand – then they refer to the profile for each candidate. NESDEC does not have a ranking system. Dr. Bettencourt went on to say that the screening committee should probably consist of 1 or 2 members of the SC, 1 or 2 members from Administration, teachers, parents, students, town officials.

Mr. Mutter noted that the proposal from NESDEC is \$7,908 – base – then we add on whatever options we decide to pick.

The next proposal was from Mr. William Garr, Executive Vice President of Future Management Systems. They have been in business for over 30 years. The company has done work for Homeland Security, does strategic planning, only does two executive searches per year, does recruitment searches, all searches are based around leadership.

Rich Moran works for the company and he has done 25 searches over the last six years and he is the former Franklin Superintendent. Herb

Levine also helps with the searches and he gives them a broader view of New England, he helps locate the candidates. The company works with the committees until they find a match; they work with the community, SC. Mr. Garr recommends a search committee and timeline – as soon as the process begins. His firm recommends advertising in a national publication, but went on to say that their best candidates come out of the New England area. Mr. Garr's firm does approximately six focus groups; it usually involves parents, SC members, students. Mr. Garr said his organization provides a lot of personal service; they let the client know what is working and what is not working. He said once an ad is placed his company makes up a leadership profile, he believes this to be critical, and they use it throughout the process- they will help the screening committee use this document to compare candidates. He said their research starts immediately, once the search committee is put together they will work with them – they review resumes, philosophy letters, letters of reference, etc., then the packets are made and the search committee starts reviewing them. They will consider about 5 or 6 top candidates, they will interview them and tell the committee what to ask, what not to ask, etc., they will do Google checks, reference checks, and because they have been around so long they have contacts in several different school districts so that they can ask about the candidates being considered and get more insight on them. Recently Mr. Garr's firm had conducted an online survey for a district and found it was very helpful. Mr. Mutter asked if FMS would work with the screening committee regarding the leadership profile. Mr.

Garr said that they would and they actually give the screening committee a list of questions in addition to the leadership profile. Mrs. Beaulieu asked what the WPS was looking for as far as a superintendent. Mr. Garr stated that they wanted someone innovative, someone that would think outside the box, someone to build teams internally – he noted that they were a high performing district and they had things that they wanted to get done and wanted someone that could take over and run with the ball. Mrs. Beaulieu noted that some of the dates on the example searches that Mr. Garr gave them look to be compact – she wondered if that was typical. Mr. Garr said that an average search runs about 4 or 5 months. Mrs. Beaulieu wanted to know if Mr. Garr thought that the philosophy was changing for superintendents. Mr. Garr said that he believes the committee is listening more to the community now, the change is that there are educational leaders, but the superintendent needs to know education and be able to work with parents, teachers, students, and the community. Mr. Gibbons asked how they could find high performing leaders. Mr. Garr said that to get high performers they look at their profiles, look at their ability to communicate, what did the principals think of them, how often they visit the schools, we check to see if they are visible in their community, do they often visit classrooms/teachers. Mr. Gibbons asked if Mr. Garr has ever conducted any searches in Rhode Island and Mr. Garr said that they had not, but have worked with our commissioner and will be competing for some Rhode Island business in the near future regarding under achieving districts. Then Mr. Gibbons asked why



Cumberland and Mr. Garr said that both he and his partner live nearby, like the district and would like to get their foot in the door. Mr. Gibbons asked if FMS worked as a headhunter type firm and if they received any compensation from it and Mr. Garr stated that they are not that type of a firm and do not receive any compensation. Mrs. Sanzi asked if any of the districts that they have worked with in the past have really turned around after the new hire. Mr. Garr thought that Franklin moved leaps and bounds, the superintendent was very structured, a great communicator, test results improved, moved the towns ranking up. Mrs. Sanzi asked about traditional vs. non traditional and Mr. Garr said that you need a performer that knows how to move the system and someone who is good with the community, a good communicator. Mrs. Sanzi then asked if he thought that the potential candidates know what the feelings were in the past about their superintendents and if so how they would feel about it. Mr. Garr thought that sometimes it is hard to work in a district with such feelings because the expectations are too high. Mrs. Sanzi asked if FMS could break the revolving door cycle that is typical for Rhode Island and Mr. Garr noted that the average stay for a superintendent in Massachusetts is about 4 years, if a superintendent leaves after a year, FMS will be back, that has never happened, but if it did, FMS would conduct another search. Mr. Rotella noted that the FMS proposal is \$15,500 and wondered what Mr. Garr's feelings were regarding FMS mentoring the superintendent into the position. Mr. Garr said that their consultants, the majority of them, are past superintendents and would do the mentoring and the coaching. Mr.

**Pedro asked if he thought he was getting honest information when coming into a community. Mr. Garr said that teachers in a focus group tend to be honest, but everyone is brutally honest on a survey. Mr. Mutter reiterated that the FMS proposal was \$15,500 plus expenses.**

**Agenda Item #3: Adjournment**

**Mr. Gibbons made a motion to adjourn, 2nd Mr. Pedro, approved 5-0.**

**Mrs. Teel and Mr. Wood were absent.**

**Meeting was adjourned at 8:02 p.m.**

**Meeting minutes respectfully submitted by Linda A. Jackvony**